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*This mission is achieved by: **Promoting** planning approaches in response to developmental and social opportunities and challenges facing the State; **Increasing** awareness of the planning process, the planning profession and the benefits that both can bring to the State of Alabama; **Supporting** planning education and fostering the growth of professional planners' knowledge and skills; **Encouraging** the exchange of planning information and experience in Alabama; and **Working** with other organizations in the State to foster common goals.*

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2010 - 2012

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ALAPA Comprehensive Plan Award

HORIZON 2025

Clair Dorough

As the largest county in the state and one that contains a diverse range of environments and communities, Baldwin County inherently requires a “one-of-a-kind” comprehensive plan. Horizon 2025 is a policy-based plan that includes goals for all facets of the county – its 200-year history, abundant natural resources, and mix of communities. Horizon 2025 is an objective of the Baldwin County Strategic Plan 2006-2016 that “Countywide development and growth over the next 10 years will be guided through the adoption in 2008 of a policy based comprehensive plan.” It also replaces the county’s previous master plan. Since the previous plan’s inception, the county has undergone drastic change in population growth and development, not to mention the change in technology and planning principles.

The plan is divided into two volumes – Volume I focuses on the written Goals, Objectives and Policies while Volume II is dedicated to data, inventory and analysis information. There are nine chapters tailored to address the county’s various growth-related issues: Future Land Use; Housing; Conservation, Natural Resources & Open Space; Coastal Management; Parks & Recreation; Historic Resources; Community Design; Intergovernmental Coordination and Implementation. There is also a multitude of maps associated with the plan, the most important of which are the Future Land Use Maps. Baldwin County is such a large area, that it was divided into four study areas to allow for greater

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HORIZON 2025

The Baldwin County Comprehensive Plan 2008-2025

Volume I: Goals, Objectives & Policies

Adopted by the Baldwin County Commission on July 7, 2009



HORIZON cont.

focus and fine tuning of the future land use visions. This division was not haphazard. Instead, the study areas were created to group similar uses and intensities and consider the natural/historical division markers of the area such as interstates or water bodies. As with the document portion of the plan, each study area map has an overarching theme, but still maintains a focus on a unique aspect of the county. For example, Study Area 4 contains the majority of the county's coastal elements, while Study Area 3 contains much of the county's agricultural uses. Study Area 2 is more urban while Study Area 1 is more rural.



Horizon 2025 considers the location, timing and intensity of future growth, but it also includes policies intended to promote high-quality development design. Chapter 9: Community Design is concerned specifically with guiding the livability and improving the physical form of development through concepts such as sustainable design and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). Existing development is acknowledged in Chapter 9 with the inclusion of “sense of place” and community development goals. One such goal is a rather innovative approach – Community Planning Areas. The purpose of Community Planning Area policies is to assist an unincorporated community in reaching its full potential by tailoring an individual plan for the area with a more precise community vision.

By addressing the county's growth issues, Horizon 2025 is, by its very nature, is an all-encompassing plan. It doesn't just address the standard-issue topics found in most comprehensive plans. The topics covered in Horizon 2025 were determined by Baldwin County – the issues citizens, stakeholders, government officials and county staff deemed important in the initial phases of the plan's development and issues identified in the Baldwin County Strategic Plan 2006-2016.

Public participation was an integral part of the development and adoption of Horizon 2025. During the development process, the plan was thoroughly reviewed, scrutinized and edited not only by the consultants, Jacksonville, Florida-based consulting firm Genesis Group, but also by the Planning Commission and

County Commission members, Planning Department and County Commission staff as well as members of the public. The process began with five meetings in four days to gather input and important issues to be incorporated into the plan. Each meeting was intended for a specific group of people.

Meeting 1 involved the Baldwin County Commission, the Baldwin County Planning Commission and County staff from multiple departments. Meeting 2 was a public meeting at a central location in the county designed to involve residents from the southern areas of the County. Meeting 3 was a stakeholder meeting attended by various groups and organizations involved in or affected by the development process including the county's 13 municipalities, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, the County Board of Education, the Economic Development Alliance, the Chambers of Commerce and utility company representatives. Meeting 4 was a public meeting for residents in the county's northern areas. And, Meeting 5 was a group meeting involving the county's various boards related to the development process – the four Boards of Adjustment, the Environmental Advisory Board, the Architectural Review Board and the Historic Development Commission.

The two public meetings identified community issues relating to the proposed plan while the governmental, stakeholder and group meetings were designed to review the existing issues that had been identified in the 2006-2016 Baldwin County Strategic Plan and ensure that important County and intergovernmental issues are identified. At the public meetings, the project's consultants asked for issues important to residents, listed them on large sheets of paper and gave each person present three stickers to vote for the issues most important to them.

The stickers were color-coded by the citizen's home location, which further identified what issues were more important to which area of the county. All issues noted at the public meetings were then added as a goal, objective or policy of the plan.

Horizon 2025 was tailored to fit the needs of Baldwin County—it covers diverse issues, including the county's natural attributes. The county's natural resources provide an abundance of scenic and recreational opportunities that are key contributors to the county's economic vitality and residential development – the reason why many visitors are drawn to the area and why so many citizens call

Baldwin County is such a large area, that it was divided into four study areas to allow for greater focus and fine tuning of the future land use visions.

HORIZON cont.

Baldwin County their home. Many other locations may concentrate their efforts on just one type of natural resource, but Baldwin County must concentrate on a wide range of natural issues. Horizon 2025 focuses attention on the county's natural resources and includes guidelines for conservation and preservation of resources such as wetlands, wildlife habitat, air quality and plant communities; the management of coastal resources such as beach dune areas, water quality and hurricane evacuation measures; and provides a system for public recreation with park classifications, levels of service and water access guidelines.



The Horizon 2025 planning process involved an extensive public participation effort.

Once a draft plan was available, it was accessible for public review via the consultant's and county websites and in hard copy at the three planning department offices. The plan was also available for public review before, during and after the Planning Commission's seven workshops during which Planning Commission members reviewed and edited the plan policy by policy – a major undertaking as Volume I alone contains more than 150 pages. The public also had opportunities to express their opinions at the seven workshops and the Planning Commission's two public hearings. On May 7, 2009 the Planning Commission recommended the plan for adoption by the County Commission. The County Commission reviewed the plan, holding three work sessions and two public hearings. At the July 7, 2009 public hearing, the Baldwin County Commission approved Resolution 2009-94, adopting Horizon 2025.

Since its adoption, environmental concerns and livability are now also considerations

when development is proposed. The plan is considered during all PRD, rezoning, conditional use and special exception applications. Each submitted application is reviewed based on its future land use district, whether the proposed use or zoning is compatible within that future land use district and other factors such as the presence of prime agricultural soils or historic resources, or the consideration of the design guidelines of the plan. The current Baldwin County Zoning Ordinance will also undergo changes, as it is revised to implement the Horizon 2025 plan.

This plan is not only a tool for the County Commission, Planning Commission and planning staff, it is also a useful tool for county residents and developers. Since zoning is established by a majority vote of the planning district, the plan gives residents a better idea of how their planning district may be zoned or developed so they can make more informed decisions. As for developers, the plan lends stability to the development process – there is now a guide for where development can be located, how it can be developed and its best and most compatible uses. The plan is intended to provide foresight and remove some of the guess work from development to ultimately allow the realization of the County's vision.



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Professional Planner Award

KENNETH GROVES, AICP

Jason R. Fondren, AICP

Ken Groves is one of Alabama's most trusted leaders in the planning profession. Groves has led and continues to lead an inspiring planning career. Since he returned to his hometown of Montgomery as Director of Planning and Development in 2001, he has transformed that department into the state's leader in city planning, downtown revitalization and innovative zoning techniques. Groves' professional dedication and his generous spirit have benefited many in his native state as well as those living in communities on the Gulf Coast and across the nation.

Groves graduated from the University of Arizona with a Master of Science in Urban Planning in 1975. After serving as Principal Planner for the Papago Indian Tribe of Arizona he moved back to Alabama in 1977 to join an architecture and planning firm in Birmingham. There, Groves was instrumental in preparing revitalization plans for Birmingham's Five Points South and Woodlawn neighborhoods. He also helped complete the first existing land use map of Jefferson County.

In 1980 Groves went to work for a planning firm in Columbus, Ohio where he crafted a national housing development program for special needs populations. While in Columbus, he continued his work in providing assisted housing to the physically handicapped, developmentally disabled and chronically mentally ill. His efforts resulted in construction of twelve housing projects in Ohio and eight projects in other cities throughout the nation.

Groves returned to Alabama in 1987, establishing a firm with architect Donald Cosby. Cosby/Groves assisted the City of Birmingham with comprehensive, neighborhood and parks and recreation planning. Following Cosby's death in 1994, Ken joined Cecil Jones and Associates, where he was able to continue consulting work with Birmingham and also worked with the Birmingham MPO on the region's Bicycle, Pedestrian and Greenway Plan. He also was responsible for implementing the firm's use of GIS in planning projects.



Ken Groves, AICP, (left) receives the Professional Planner Award from Tom Magee (right) of the ALAPA Awards Committee.

Groves served one term as President of the ALAPA from 1996 to 1998. In 1998, he left for Baton Rouge where he served as Director of Mississippi Operations for Louisiana-based Coastal Environments Inc. In that role he provided a variety of planning services to state, county and local governments on the Gulf Coast. Much of his work focused on environmental issues and "smart growth" planning for coastal communities. Groves directed the Mississippi Gulf Coast Comprehensive Resource Management Planning Process (CRMP) for the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, whose mission was to develop a plan to accommodate growth and development on a sustainable basis and protect the natural resources on which the economy depends. During his time on the Gulf Coast, Groves helped prepare a Land Suitability Analysis Model, which used the Model Builder Function in ArcView's Spatial Analyst. The model has enabled CRMP participants, both technical and non-technical, to evaluate the effects of land use policy decisions in real time.

Mayor Bobby Bright lured Groves back to Alabama in 2001. He returned to Montgomery to lead the City's Planning and Development Department. Since Ken took over the reins, he has converted the planning department—which, before 2001, was limited primarily to zoning controls and the administration of CDBG funds—to a leading local government planning agency in the state. When he arrived, there was little formal planning taking place; and community involvement in planning and development decisions was minimal.

Today in Montgomery, there is an active neighborhood planning program in place, a conceptual plan for the city's overall growth and reinvestment, a Downtown Plan in place and being executed, and SmartCode adopted and working very well, both in downtown (mandatory) and as an overlay citywide. Since Groves' return,



A team of consultants working under the direction of Groves and City officials recently completed the West Fairview Plan. The plan to revitalize a historic business and residential area adjacent to Sidney Lanier High School has been approved by the city's planning commission. Like Montgomery's award-winning Downtown Plan, the West Fairview Plan was prepared by Dover Kohl and includes recommendations for application of the city's adopted SmartCode. Local planners and engineers from Barge Waggoner Sumner and Cannon, 2WR/Holmes Wilkins Architects and Goodwyn Mills and Cawood assisted Dover Kohl on the project.

GROVES cont.

traditional neighborhood developments (TNDs) and SmartCode-enabled projects are taking place with increasing frequency. In fact, Groves recently moved to Hampstead, a mixed-use neighborhood in Montgomery master-planned by New Urbanists Duany Plater-Zyberk.

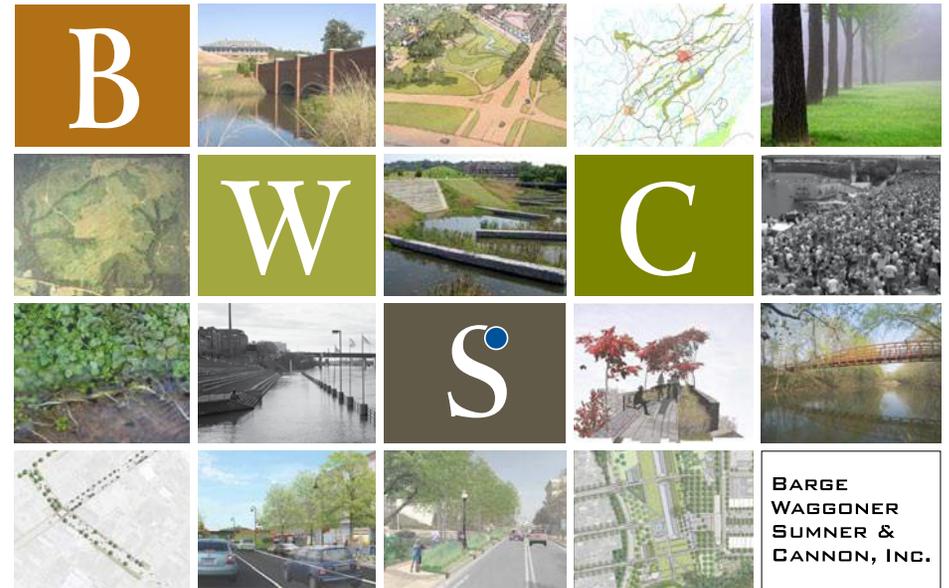
After Hurricane Katrina, Groves generously shared his time and talents with Gulf Coast communities devastated by the storm. He volunteered to assist the Mississippi Governor's Commission on Coastal Recovery with the blessing of Mayor Bobby Bright, who provided Groves' services to assist in recovery efforts. It was a unique opportunity for Groves to work with former colleagues and clients on the Mississippi coast to speed up recovery while planning for the region's future. He participated in planning charrettes in Bay St. Louis, Pass Christian, Gulfport, Ocean Springs and Pascagoula, Mississippi. As a result of the work of Groves and other planners and designers assisting in the recovery process, several Gulf Coast communities have taken rather progressive steps in laying out their future and creating a new framework for redeveloping the areas damaged by Katrina, including adoption of the SmartCode for designated neighborhoods in several participating communities and citywide in others.

Groves has always been an avid supporter of Alabama planners, who—he has remarked in the past—do a lot with very little. In addition to his responsibilities as the capital city's planning director, Groves contributes to the profession through speaking engagements, including his recent presentation at the ALAPA Spring Conference in Tuscaloosa and the ASLA's Twin States Conference in Biloxi.

Congratulations to Mr. Groves on his well-deserved recognition as ALAPA's top planner for 2010!

Jobs for Planners

If you have a job opening, or know of open positions that might be of interest to Alabama Planners, please email them to jfondren@kpsgroup.com. There is no charge for placing job postings in the newsletter.



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BWSC

Plan Award

WEST FLORENCE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

Jason R. Fondren, AICP

The West Florence Neighborhood Plan is the first neighborhood plan prepared by the City of Florence since adoption of the city's Comprehensive Plan in 2007. West Florence is one of the city's great neighborhoods – one in which a diverse community of residents and property owners honor their past and through this plan have come to recognize its potential. Members of the community felt that, in some ways, they had been left behind, even as the city at large has prospered. Regardless, residents still contribute to their neighborhood a level of care and pride in their homes and workplaces. That spirit was present throughout the planning process.

Many West Florence residents and property owners experienced and participated in development of the city's Comprehensive Plan during 2006-2007. They realized how planning at the neighborhood scale could help focus efforts to improve the quality of life in West Florence. They used this plan opportunity to bore down into the essence of their community and its role in the larger city.

The plan puts into words, maps and illustrations the vision for the neighborhood. It balances neighborhood assets, issues, and opportunities with those of the city at large. It provides guidelines and recommendations for growth, conservation, infill and reinvestment, and illustrates the ways in which potential catalyst projects may improve the neighborhood.

West Florence residents envisioned a more walkable neighborhood better connected to the surrounding community and with vehicular traffic calmed by proper street design. The plan identified priority investments such as construction of a bridge across Cypress Creek to provide better access to the city's nearby sports complex (the city has since received federal funding for the project), street and sidewalk improvements, and open space and trail projects. The plan also illustrated ways that the neighborhood and city might better take advantage of historic commercial and institutional areas in the neighborhood.



The planning process relied heavily on community interaction, review and consensus building. With support from councilman Sam Pendleton, Jr., a neighborhood steering committee guided preparation of the plan in cooperation with the city's planning staff and planning consultant KPS Group. The involvement of committee members has continued in support of neighborhood – and citywide – plan implementation.

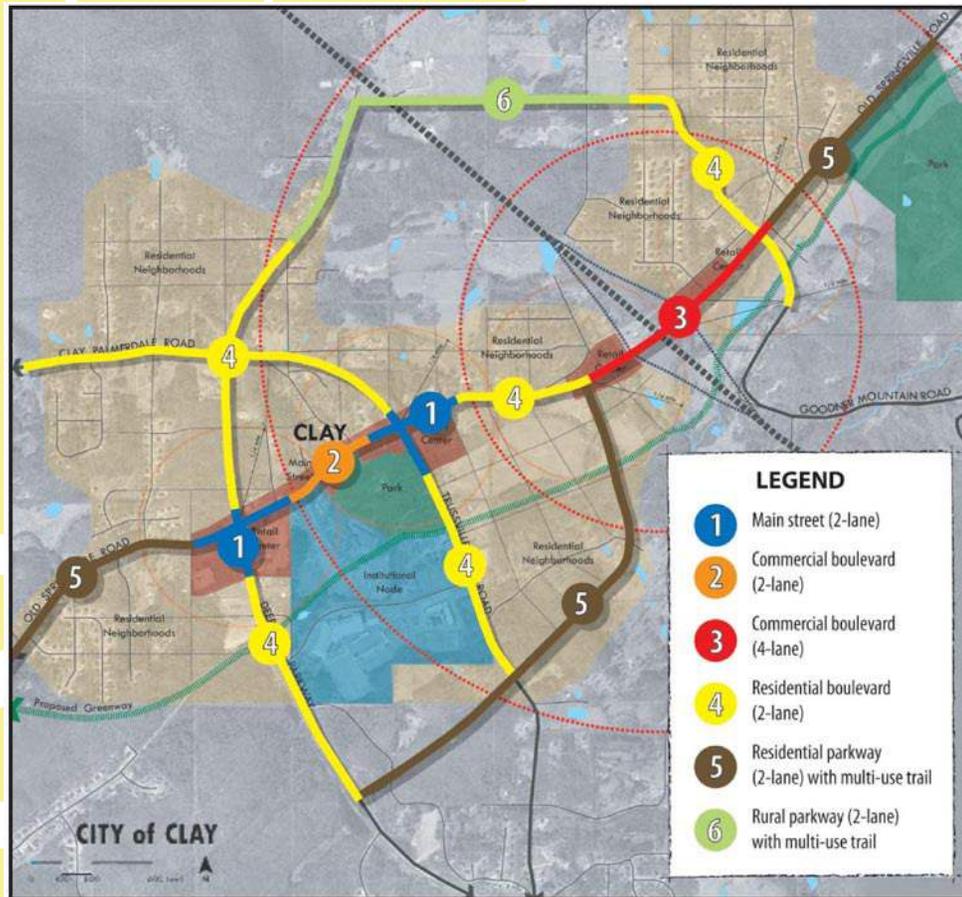


The neighborhood plan included recommendations for a site in West Florence where W.C. Handy's home is now located as well as the former Burrell-Slater High School, which now serves as a community education facility.

Program, Project, or Tool Award

NORTHERN BELTLINE INTERSECTING ROADWAYS PLAN

The Northern Beltline Intersecting Roadways (NBIR) Plan was completed in May 2008 by staff of the Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization and consultants Gresham Smith and Partners. It is the culmination of three small area studies to plan for the future land use and transportation impacts of the future Northern Beltline on three intersecting roadways: CR 30 (Old Springville Rd.) in Clay, US 78 in Graysville, and CR 46 (Warrior River Road) in Hueytown. The Plan represents each community's vision for its intersecting roadway and surrounding network and includes recommendations to achieve their vision.



The NBIR Plan contains tools to assist communities along the Beltline with managing the future travel impacts that will come from completion of the roadway and the development that will ensue. The planning team reviewed each community's character, land use and economic context. At community workshops, visioning exercises elicited community concepts for the interchange areas. The planning team used interactive tools to gather participants' input on future development, including a community preference survey and a dot map exercise. The community preference survey prompted citizens to consider the possibilities of future growth and identify place-types that made sense for their community. The dot map exercise enabled participants to designate the location, type and general intensity of future development—greenfield, redevelopment, or infill—in their community and the corresponding transportation networks. From these concepts, the planning team developed a land use vision and transportation vision for each community.

Context sensitive roadway design is relatively new in Alabama. The release of *Context Sensitive Solutions in Designing Major Urban Thoroughfares for Walkable Communities* from the Institute of Transportation Engineers in 2005 raised awareness of the need to respond to the community's physical context when designing roadways. The team considered the existing and future context of each interchange area. Roadway network maps and design sections reveal how the roadways can blend with community character while promoting efficient travel. Street cross sections included the amount of right-of-way needed for improvements, street and lane width, pedestrian refuge islands, sidewalk and bicycle facilities, on-street parking, lane configuration, access spacing, bus stops, mid-block crosswalks, utility location and maintenance, and emergency vehicle operations.



A Major Street Plan for the areas around the Beltline interchanges was developed for Clay, Graysville and Hueytown. Through the implementation of a Major Street Plan, rights-of-way can be preserved for the development of future roads. The authority of the Major Street Plan is established in the Alabama Code of Law, Section 11-52-8.

Integrating transportation and land use planning is the key component of the NBIR Plan, providing common ground for local government planners, engineers and economic development officials. The elected officials,

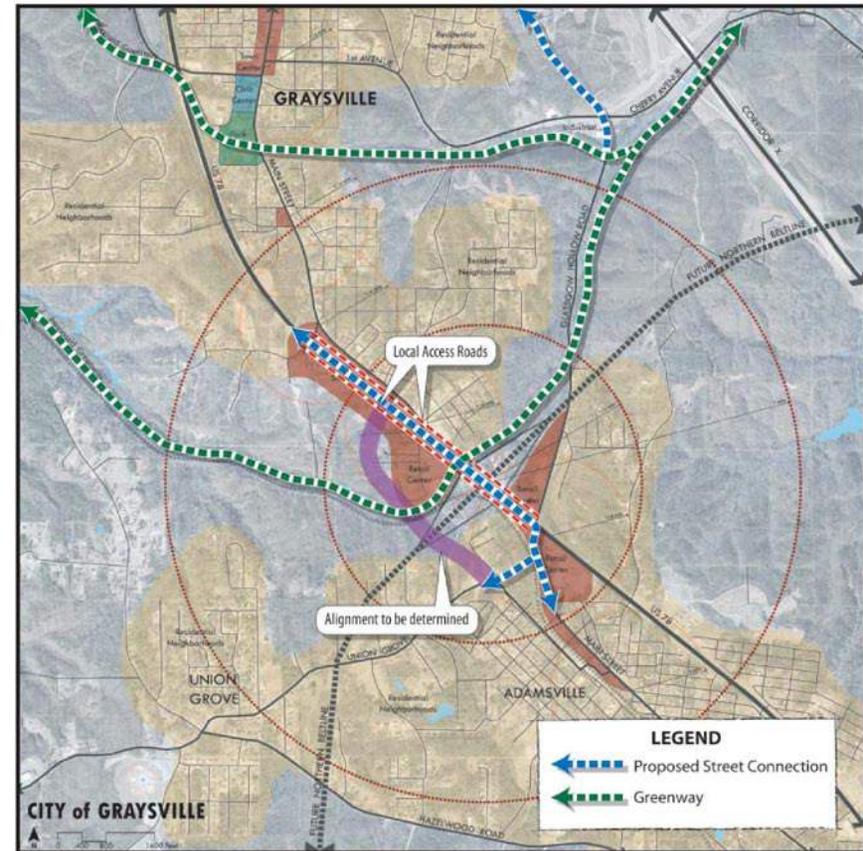
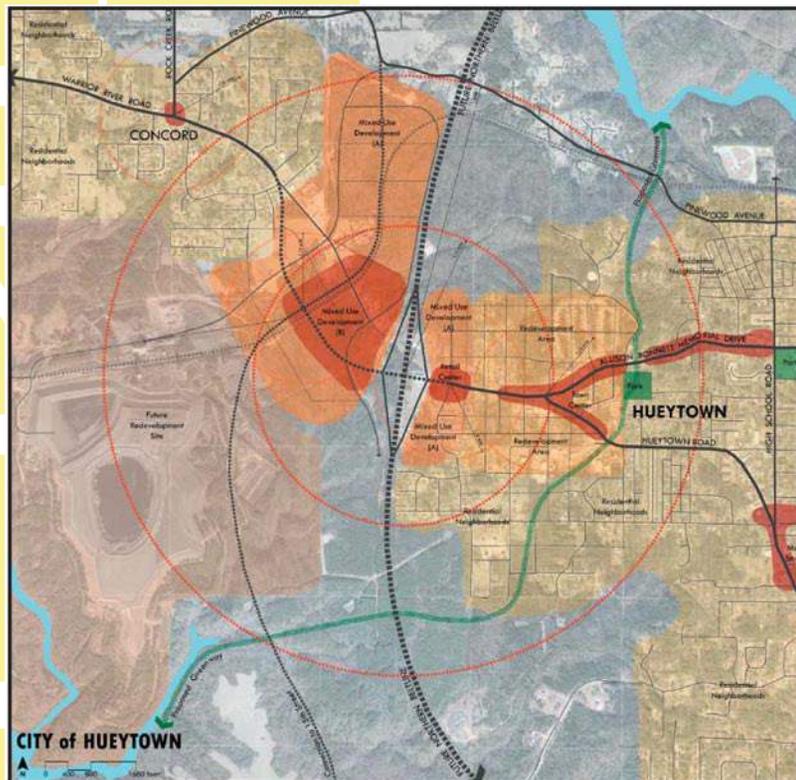
RPCGB's Planning Director speaks on the Northern Beltline Plan at the State Chapter's Spring Conference in Tuscaloosa

BELTLINE cont.

residents and other participating stakeholders from Clay, Graysville and Hueytown learned the importance of this relationship during the public engagement process.

Prior to the Plan, these communities had only a general idea of the interchange locations in or near their communities and the development pressures that would accompany the new roadway. As a result of this Plan, the communities have a strategic guide for development and associated infrastructure improvements and a plan and schedule of roadway improvements that can be worked into the local budgeting process.

Although the full planning benefit to the communities will not be seen for 20-30 years—when the Beltline is constructed—the Plan stands as a great resource for the communities to refer to as growth occurs in the near future as well. For example, the Plan allows the communities to begin preserving the right-of-way needed to implement their Major Street Plan. The plan process also served as an educational tool, bringing cooperative, integrated land use and transportation planning to communities that had had little exposure to contemporary planning practices.



Since completion of the Plan, the cities have moved forward with additional planning for their communities. The City of Clay approved, adopted and amended their existing Master Plan to include the Major Street Plan in the summer of 2008. The City of Graysville has continued to administer programs that link transportation and land use, specifically through adoption of form based code standards in April 2009 that provide standards for street design adhering to the concept of ‘Complete Streets’ and include provisions for access management, off-street parking standards, sidewalks and street lighting. The City of Hueytown has continued to administer programs that link transportation and land use, including adoption of a redevelopment and improvement plan for a tax increment financing (TIF) district. The goals of the district include public improvements for streets, utilities, lighting, sidewalk improvements, and landscaping for safe vehicular and pedestrian travel in an area concentrated around Allison Bonnett Memorial Drive, which provides access to Hueytown from the proposed Northern Beltline.

ALAPA Scholarship Program

The Alabama APA Scholarship Intern Program is proud to announce the award of two scholarship internships for 2010.

The first award is to the City of Northport to employ Mr. Alan Axford. Mr. Axford is a Regional and Urban Planning student at the University of Alabama. As part of his duties, Mr. Axford will work with staff on coordinating and holding public input meetings on the proposed Northport Zoning Ordinance and conduct research for the upcoming update to the comprehensive plan primarily consisting of internet research on national and local statistical data on subjects like recreational facilities, public safety, education, health care, transportation, etc. This will involve work with city departments and agencies such as the Parks and Recreation Authority, Northport Fire and Police Departments and the Tuscaloosa County Board of Education. Mr. Axford will also work with staff to form target committees of citizens and local professionals on comprehensive plan topics who will then meet to formulate goals, objectives, and policies for the plan.

A second award has been made to the City of Vestavia Hills to employ Robert B. Scott, Jr. Mr. Scott is a Masters student in Public Administration at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. As part of his duties, he will be responsible for pulling legal notification for each case presented to the Planning and Zoning Commission, Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA) and Design Review Board. He

will assist staff in following each case to conclusion. Mr. Scott will be responsible for maintaining several filing systems, as well as accessing the GIS system to pull legal information, notification information, plat information, etc. He will also attend public meetings and support the City Clerk and Deputy Clerk, assist in requests before the City Council concerning ordinances, resolutions, alcohol license approvals, among others; and see how municipal government works from the inside out.

Each year, in an effort to provide intern opportunities as mentioned above, the Alabama APA Scholarship Intern Program has solicited donations from members. We desperately need your financial support to continue this valuable program. An annual tax deductible donation of \$25 per APA member made payable to the Alabama APA Scholarship Fund would help provide funding for students seeking internships in areas of urban, suburban, regional and rural planning.

Please send your tax deductible donation today to:

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William R. Foisy, Scholarship Intern Committee Administrator
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SOUTHEAST REGION

NEWS BRIEFS

Plan to Expand Wildlife Refuge Considered. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed a long-term plan to expand the 3,600-acre Cahaba River National Wildlife Refuge in Bibb County to upwards of 200,000 acres. The proposal would allow the federal agency to purchase land or conservation easements from willing owners to protect the bio-diverse river corridor from harmful effects linked to land development. Some have expressed concern that the proposal might lead to the agency seizing land, however, the proposal specifies that eminent domain could not be used within the acquisition boundary. The public comment period is open until September 7, at which time the Fish and Wildlife Service will consider changes that may come from public input and submit the finalized plan for review by Fish and Wildlife Service officials in Washington, D.C.

Battle over Drive-Through Ends Peaceably. Over the last several months, a contentious debate has raged over the proposed opening of a Chic-Fil-A restaurant in Birmingham's Five Points South. Representatives of the restaurant chain presented their plans to develop the site on Highland Avenue and 20th Street South to the city's Design Review Committee. The Committee rejected the proposal, a decision strongly supported by neighboring business owners and residents, who felt that the drive-through would congest traffic at the busy intersection and go against past efforts to enhance the pedestrian-oriented, urban dining and entertainment district. Chic-Fil-A's representatives appealed the decision to a rarely used city appeals board, who affirmed the DRC decision on June 21. On August 25, Chic-Fil-A won approval from the DRC by removing the drive-through element and making other plan changes that conformed with the long-standing revitalization district plan for Five Points South. The controversy also spurred the organization of a local advocacy group "I Believe in Birmingham," who also this summer labored against a proposal to demolish an historic fire station for a national drug store chain. The developer relented and promised to adaptively reuse the fire station when it came to light that the national chain had made an agreement in 2002 with the National Trust for Historic Preservation not to raze nationally-registered buildings.

New Bike Regs in Huntsville. On August 26, the Huntsville City Council adopted an ordinance requiring new businesses, which must have 20 or more parking spaces in accordance with the city's zoning ordinance, provide bike racks near the front entrance. Multi-family residential developments must provide one bicycle space for every five dwelling units. Existing businesses will be required to install

bicycle parking if expansion necessitates an increase in vehicular parking. Bicycle parking is typically placed on sites where they are most visible to occupants and visitors to discourage tampering or theft.

Master Plan to Preserve Fort. The Fort Mims Restoration Association, with the help from member and landscape architect Charles S. McCulloh, is preparing a master plan to guide the preservation and development of the archaeological site in Baldwin County. A preliminary version of the plan is now being reviewed by the association, who has also sought the advice of the Alabama Historical Commission on their efforts to restore the site. The organization will seek grant funds to rebuild the stockade, blockhouse and other structures and add new features outside the archaeological area, including an amphitheater and archive building.

Dothan Begins Sign Regulations Overhaul. As part of a larger process to update the city's development regulations, Dothan's Zoning Re-write Committee met on August 24 to discuss its sign regulations. The effort is being facilitated by Dothan's planning staff. Among the issues the committee has identified to tackle are the provisions for abandoned, dilapidated, temporary and portable signs.

Valley Receives Tourism Notice. On August 17, The Alabama Tourism Department honored the City of Valley and the Cotton Mill Reunion with its 2010 Theme Campaign award, recognizing Valley's homecoming celebration as part of



Masons in Valley hold a cornerstone-laying ceremony during the city's Homecoming-Small Town and Downtown celebration.

the statewide Year of Small Towns and Downtowns campaign. Award criteria included performance, economic impact, consistency with the state's campaign theme, increased tourist appeal, attendance, and enhancement of the area's image as a tourist destination. Among the other winners at the black tie ceremony in Montgomery were James Rane Sr. of Great Southern Wood on Abbeville (Governor's Tourism Award), the Alabama Music Hall of Fame in Tusculumbia (Attraction of the Year), the Star Wars Exhibit at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville (Event of the Year), and Montgomery Mayor Todd Strange (Government Advocate Award).

BRIEFS cont.

Duany Makes Splash in Mobile. On Thursday September 2, New Urbanist planner Andres Duany delivered an ominous speech at the annual meeting of the Mobile Downtown Alliance. The Mobile group sought Duany to reinvigorate interest in traditional urban planning and development. During his speech, Duany contended that Mobile's growth patterns are unsustainable and threaten the city's ability to economically thrive and grow in the future. Major trends in demographics, energy and governmental ability to fund infrastructure growth are in conflict with the conventional model of suburbanization. During his visit, Duany made two overall recommendations: plan for retrofitting the suburbs and change regulations to support better development.

Good news for Jackson County. The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) announced it will reopen the Bellefonte Nuclear Plant. The \$248 million plan will create 200 permanent jobs and up to 2,500 construction jobs. Earlier this year, TVA made plans to open a training center in Hollywood (AL), which would employ 50 and have 150-200 people using the facility per week. Finally, commercial refrigeration manufacturer HTPG recently announced plans to move its Yuma, AZ operations to its state-of-the-art facility in Scottsboro. The move will create about 200 jobs. Ron Bailey of the Greater Jackson County Chamber of Commerce credits part of the county's recent successes with its proximity and access to Huntsville and Chattanooga.

SAVE THE DATE

Alabama Chapter Spring Conference

March 30-April 1, 2011

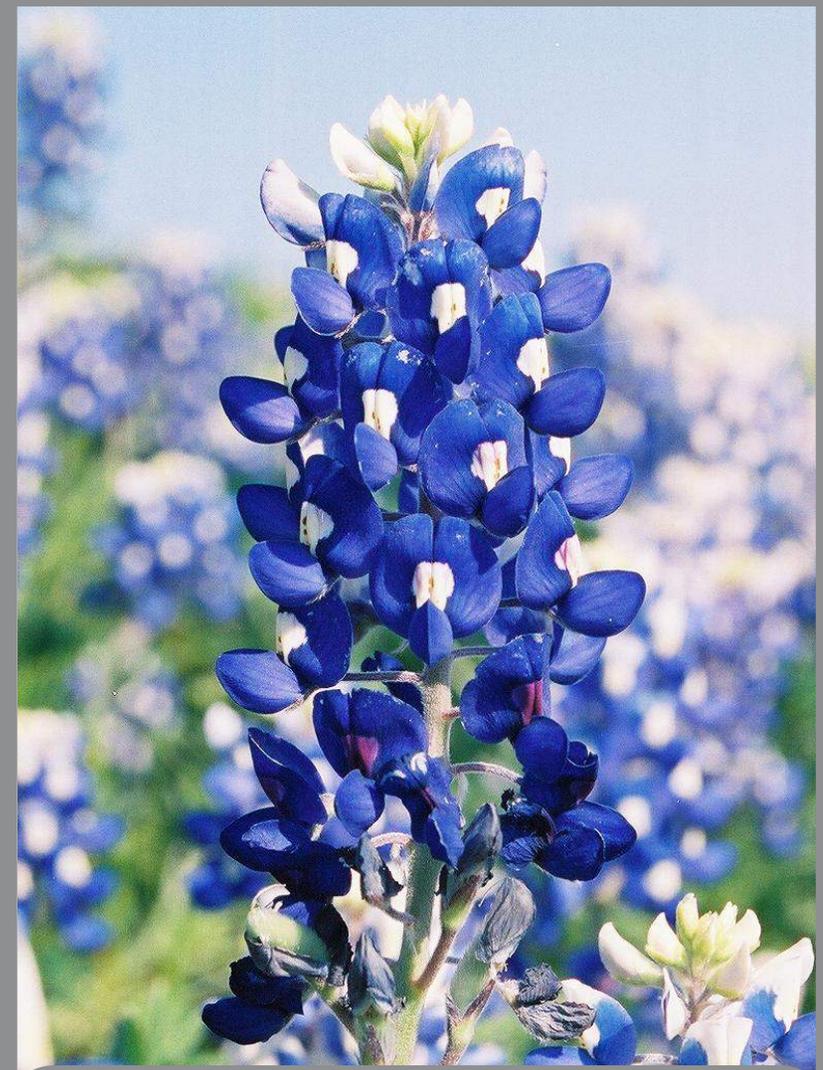
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PLANNING – PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Franklin M. Setzer Urban Design Award

14TH STREET IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Jason R. Fondren, AICP

The 14th Street Improvement Project is a sixteen-block streetscape improvement project, between 10th Avenue South and 8th Avenue North in Downtown Birmingham.

The project was initiated, funded and managed by the City of Birmingham with matching construction funds from the ALDOT. The project includes walks, lights, landscaping, and other landscape improvements in response to a long planning and urban design process. It is currently nearing completion.

This year, ALAPA named the City of Birmingham the 2010 recipient of the chapter's urban design award. The award is named for Frank Setzer, late director of the Auburn University Center for Architecture and Urban Studies, which is located in Downtown Birmingham. Setzer was an instigator and ardent promoter of this project and of Downtown Birmingham as a whole. Without doubt, he would be pleased to know that this link between the north and south end—a major railroad corridor divides the north and south halves of the city center—of western Downtown Birmingham has been remade.



14th Street, looking south toward UAB, as it appeared before construction.

The newly improved street now enhances the west side of the Railroad Reservation Park nearing completion and provides a more attractive connection from the Southside neighborhood and UAB to the city center's entrepreneurial district and to the new Social Security Administration Building at its north end. Setzer might also note with pride that these streetscape improvements tie into the nearby Civil Rights District and will support housing development opportunities in Midtown, another focus of Setzer's as a member of the Midtown Housing Task Force.



14th STREET cont.

The 14th Street Corridor has repeatedly been acknowledged as a critical element in Downtown Birmingham—one in great need of improvement. This project was identified as an important element of the City Center open space system that Setzer helped devise in the 1990s. In 1996, the City prepared the 14th Street Corridor Plan, identifying the street as a major pedestrian corridor with potential for adjacent mixed-use development and a more pedestrian-oriented environment. Birmingham later updated the City Center Master Plan, reaffirming 14th Street as an important corridor to link the central business district and UAB.

The City succeeded in acquiring funding assistance from ALDOT and prepared the 14th Street Streetscape Implementation Plan in 2006 with assistance from KPS Group, Inc. The plan provided design standards and expectations for construction



A new 14th Street emerges during construction.

design. Initially, the ALDOT determined that highway clear zone standards would need to be followed though 14th Street is not a state highway. The design team feared this would compromise the urban, pedestrian-oriented goals for the project's design. After consultation with city and ALDOT staff, the team got approval without losing those elements the city and designers felt were necessary to transforming the street into a contextually-appropriate, urban thoroughfare.

Since the beginning of the corridor planning process there have been many public and private initiatives to revitalize the 14th Street Corridor as a healthy mixed-use district. Innovation Depot, the Social Security Administration Building, Heritage Hall at UAB, and the University Place housing development are recent additions to the area. And, the Railroad Reservation Park is expected to open in September. All were built with the understanding that this streetscape project would come to fruition and serve as an integral link between them and the other destinations adjacent to the corridor.



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Friend of Planning Award

DR. WARREN MCCORD

Jason R. Fondren, AICP

Dr. Warren McCord has dedicated over thirty years to the future of his community—Auburn, Alabama. In that time, McCord served on various planning committees and the city's planning commission, including a stint as commission chair. McCord is a current member of the Auburn Planning Commission and chairperson of the Auburn Development Authority. "Warren's willingness to commit the time he has over the past 35 years to the planning efforts of the Auburn community demonstrates his dedication to the planning discipline," Forrest Cotten, Planning Director said.

Last Fall, in an opinion piece in the Opelika-Auburn News, McCord said this of community planning:

"Community planning is a continuous process, not something that should be done sporadically. Healthy communities are continuously adjusting to meet changing conditions and citizen needs and desires. So, strong communities are constantly planning, looking ahead for the next opportunities and positioning themselves to take advantage of them. When city goals are met or determined to no longer be relevant, the city should be ready to move on to others. The rate of change in technology, economics, society and politics is accelerating and consistently successful communities stay on top of them."



Dr. McCord graduated from Florence State College and received his Ph.D. from Auburn University working on a fellowship with the university's Department of Botany and Plant Pathology. His academic work at Auburn eventually led him to a thirty-one year career with the Alabama Cooperative Extension Service. During his time with the ACES, Dr. McCord worked in the agency's community resource development program and helped form the Alabama Marine and Sea Grant Extension Program and Extension offices at Forts Rucker and McClellan. McCord represented the Extension Service in the Alabama Tourism Partnership and worked with the Economic Development Institute to create the Leadership for Economic Development and Mentoring Program. He also played an important role in forming the Alabama Urban and Community Forestry Partnership, which combines resources from the Auburn University School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, the Alabama Forestry Commission, the Alabama Urban Forestry Commission and other public and private organizations to provide grants to Alabama communities to develop and enhance their forestry resources. Prior to his career with ACES, McCord served as environmental director with the East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission.

Congratulations Dr. McCord and thank you for your service to the State of Alabama and your long-time support of planning and community development.

JRWVA

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Media-Coverage Award

RUSS COREY-TIMES DAILY, FLORENCE

Jesse Turner, Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments

The US 72 Corridor Study was initiated in the Fall of 2008 and completed in the Summer of 2009. Russ Corey and the Times Daily covered the story through a series of twelve succinct, yet effective articles strategically written to coincide with the study's major milestones: study initiation, before and after public workshops and prior to the presentation of final recommendations.

The US 72 Corridor is an important mobility and economic asset for the Northwest Alabama region. The Study was tasked with addressing the seemingly competing objectives of maintaining the corridor's rural, high-speed, high-mobility status with the desire for increased access for economic development by the communities located along this burgeoning corridor. Russ Corey, writing on behalf of the Times Daily, did an outstanding job of covering the study from initiation to completion by providing fair, objective and comprehensive coverage while keeping the initiative at the forefront of the region's conscience.

Given the competing objectives of mobility and access along the corridor, the Study received interest from different viewpoints. Mr. Corey's media coverage not only fairly represented those viewpoints through first-person interviews, but did an accurate job of objectively describing the tradeoffs of different approaches for addressing growth and development along the corridor.

The [Corridor Study](#) is available on the NACOLG website.



Planning Student/Team Award

SARAH SISSER & STEPHEN STOCK

PRESERVATION PLAN FOR THE TALLASSEE MILL NO. 1 COMPLEX AND MILL VILLAGE

Tallassee, Alabama is divided by the Tallapoosa River, with historic textile mills on both the east and west banks. The mills, once an important part of the community's economy, are now both vacant like so many throughout Alabama.

Auburn University planning students Stephen Stock and Sarah Sisser developed a plan to preserve the mill building on the west bank of the river, as well as the accessory buildings within the mill complex and many of the historic homes surrounding the mill that were originally built to house mill workers - the "mill village". The students' plan called for the creation of a local historic district with design standards to encompass the mill village, preserving the character of the historic neighborhood as part of the important historical context surrounding the mill.

Of course, Mill No. 1 is in very poor condition after years of abandonment. The roof has caved in and the interior has been exposed to the elements. The preservation plan proposed that the mill building be adaptively reused as an aviary/botanical garden, which would require only minimal rehabilitation. This reuse would create an opportunity to attract birdwatchers. Birding has become a significant tourist activity throughout the world and contributed \$36 billion dollars to the U.S. economy in 2006, according to the Fish and Wildlife Service. Birding is particularly popular in Alabama due to the state's bio-diversity and wealth of bird habitat.

The students' hope was to create a preservation plan that would not only save these historic resources but also to identify an effective way for them to once again contribute to Tallassee's economy.



IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING

The rational next step in the comprehensive planning continuum

By Dale Richard Powers, AICP

Once a municipality embarks on the development of land use policies, the traditional course of action is to adopt a comprehensive land use plan and enabling ordinances.

In this author's opinion, an important aspect of the comprehensive planning process is being left out. While the comprehensive plan clearly details policy priorities, the enabling ordinances do not. Text alone is insufficient to communicate direction to staff on methods and styles of administration and enforcement. This has the real potential of unintentionally thwarting the political will of the elected body when it adopted the land use policies. Almost invariably, this is discovered after the fact. As a result, the elected officials may sense their political careers threatened, since land use controls are normally very politically sensitive.

This article introduces the concept of a post-ordinance plan that provides guidance and direction to those entrusted with administration and enforcement of the comprehensive plan. This plan – called the “implementation plan” – provides a level of dynamism that is not present in enabling ordinances.

The implementation plan not only provides priorities for enforcement, it also establishes systems for the administration of zoning requests (CUPs, variances, plats, zoning map amendments, site plan reviews, etc.) and dealing with the inevitability of “after the fact” requests. Finally, the implementation plan can be useful in evaluating the performance of staff.

ELEMENTS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

From the view of a City Council, the comprehensive planning process is similar to buying a car. As we all know, in buying a car we order features for their derived benefits. For example, we order air conditioning so we can survive summer weather in comfort. Call the completion of the comprehensive plan the identification of the overall benefits we seek in our new car. The next step – drafting of enabling ordinances – is akin to matching features to benefits. Once built, the new car's features (ordinances) should be a perfect match for the benefits (comprehensive plan) desired by its owner (City Council).

There is one distinct difference – when we order a new vehicle, inside the glove box is an owner's manual that gives direction and guidance in operating it. If this guidance and direction isn't followed, the warranty can be voided.

As with any other piece of machinery, there are aspects to owning a car that are vital to its continued operation (regular oil changes) and others that are mere niceties (washer fluid). The same is true with bringing a comprehensive plan to life. Consequently, the first step in creating an implementation plan is the ranking land use policy preferences.

After this exercise, which may be performed during the comprehensive planning process, the next step is to introduce two elements of implementation – process and compliance – and share with the decision makers options to consider.

PROCESS

There are several basic elements to the development review process: procedural, technical, legal, and political. Planners have the most influence over procedural steps, and as they gravitate from procedure through technical and legal processes their influence diminishes. Finally (and ideally), planners have virtually no influence over the political process. As much as planners establish a fair process for review, and as much as planners ensure that technical and legal matters are discovered and addressed, in the end it's the decision makers that make the final call.

Procedural matters are where the planner has the most influence. But, this is the area that is most foreign to decision makers. As a professional planner who served a term on the Clear Lake (Minnesota) City Council, I can attest to the fact that procedure can be viewed as a Rubik's cube to a lay decision maker who simply wants to approve or deny the petitioner's request and doesn't understand the need for due process. Memorializing the process for review of zoning requests such as variances, use permits, plats, zoning map amendments, and the like, benefits both the decision makers and planning staff. For the decision makers, a comfort level is established whereby a particular policy preference enabled by ordinance will be administered according to a uniform procedure known to, and approved by, the elected officials. For staff, a

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IMPLEMENTATION cont.

separate comfort level is established. In situations where the status of the petitioner may influence the review process—which is common in smaller jurisdictions, establishing a written procedure gives staff a degree of protection.

As part of the development of the process section of the implementation plan, the follow elements should be discussed:

- What information about the applicant is required on the application
- Whether agent information (e. g. legal representative, real estate agent, property owner, or other third party) should be included on the application
- Submittal requirements for each type of zoning request, pre-application conferences, and timelines for submittal of required documents
- Internal and external staff review procedure
- Negotiation of conditions on use permits between staff and the petitioner
- Whether and when the petitioner receives a copy of the staff report
- Number and types of hearings and meetings required to consider requests
- Responsibility for required publication of public hearings
- Post-approval recording responsibilities

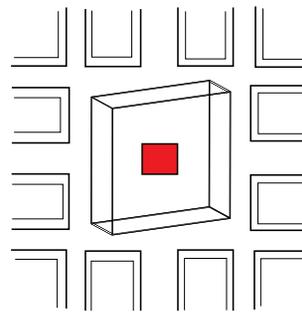
Throughout the development of the process section of the implementation plan, the governing body needs to ensure that its policy preferences are identified and the review procedure reflects those preferences. In doing so, the governing body will be drafting a document that is as dynamic as the comprehensive plan – bringing life to the plain text of the enabling ordinances.

It is not recommended that the process section be codified. This allows the governing body flexibility to change its policy preferences—and their impact on elements of the implementation plan—without the expenses associated with notice and a hearing.

COMPLIANCE

Ordinances are mere words on paper without a plan to enforce their compliance. A general rule is that the smaller the jurisdiction, the less likely that a uniform system of insuring compliance will be established. This exposes municipalities to claims of arbitrariness and capriciousness in compliance matters (when an ordinance is enforced), as well as mandamus claims (when an ordinance is not enforced).

A systematic method of ensuring compliance with ordinances provides many benefits to the governing body. Since they are the entity directly accountable to the citizens, the governing body is more attuned to the political realities of their jurisdiction and are best able to communicate the importance of stringent enforcement of certain ordinances and laissez faire responses to other violations.



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IMPLEMENTATION cont.

I believe there is universal agreement that a burning pile of tires or a home occupation that generates excessive noise and traffic should be addressed as matters of public health and safety. It is in the enforcement of property maintenance and zoning codes that are mainly aesthetic in nature—or a minor nuisance—that a compliance element is beneficial. Without said direction, the governing body runs the risk of staff enforcing the ordinances according to their own opinions. This creates a “catch 22” situation, where staff can’t really be faulted for doing their job, yet the political will of the decision makers is nevertheless compromised.

Another area of compliance has to do with theory vs. reality. As it relates to ordinance enforcement, when a governing body enacts, for example, ordinance

language prohibiting junk cars or junk and debris, it has a particular vision in mind. However, staff is bound by the text of the ordinance and comports itself accordingly. One case I dealt with at Kendall County brings this to light. The County has an ordinance restricting off-premise signage in agricultural districts. To the County Board, this

regulation was intended to address conventional billboards. However, a hay wagon at a busy rural intersection advertising a nearby residential development fit the definition of off-premise signage. A complaint was sent to the property owner and the matter was heard by the County’s code hearing officer. After hearing testimony, the officer ruled that it was not an off-premise sign at all – it was a hay wagon. One of the County Board members afterward suggested that perhaps such signs should be permitted.



The compliance section of the implementation plan should include the following elements:

- An understanding of what the governing body intends to enforce
- Establishment of enforcement priorities
- Discussion of compliance techniques
- Identification and assignment of appropriate compliance inspectors

As with the development of the process section of the implementation plan, when completing the compliance section the governing body needs to ensure that its policy preferences are identified and that the procedures reflect those preferences.

HIRING A FACILITATOR

A facilitator should be used to coordinate discussion and draft the implementation plan. Using an existing staff member as a facilitator is possible and could save the jurisdiction money. If this route is taken, the facilitator should not come from any department involved with administration or enforcement of ordinances. This will avoid partiality on the part of the facilitator, which will promote open communication amongst the City Council, Planning Commission, and staff.

It is important to note that the relationship between the governing body and staff can be contentious. The source of this lies in the differing roles of the governing body (“do the right thing”) and staff (“do things right”). One of the main objectives of developing an implementation plan is for the governing body to communicate to staff what it perceives as “doing things right.”

CONCLUSION

The implementation plan introduces a level of dynamism to adopted policies that can be obscured when regulatory tools are created to enable those policies. When properly developed, the implementation plan will guide and direct staff in how the ordinances are to be processed, administered and enforced to conform with adopted policies.

Dale Richard Powers, AICP, is CEO of ZIA Planning Systems of Clear Lake, Minnesota. This article is an abridged version edited for publication. For the unabridged version, contact Mr. Powers at dalepowers@ziaplanning.com

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